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SUBJECT: HUNGARY'S PRELIMINARY PLANNING FOR THEIR EU
PRESIDENCY

1. SUMMARY: In a meeting with PolOffs July 22, Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives outlined current efforts underway for Hungary's upcoming rotation as EU President, which will begin January 1, 2011. Hungary's 18-month "EU Trio" partners are Spain and Belgium. Significant coordination and collaboration is already underway concerning the trio's joint political roles beginning with Spain's EU Presidency on January 1, 2010. Current Hungarian planning includes preliminary steps addressing preparations for its rotation, potential ratification of the Lisbon treaty, as well as an expected change of government following the spring 2010 national elections. END SUMMARY.

THE FIRST "EU TRIO"

12. Peter Bartha and Peter Szoke of the MFA's EU Presidency, Coordination and Legal Affairs Department met with PolOffs July 22 to discuss Hungary's preparations for their EU Presidency beginning January 1, 2011. Hungary has formed a "Trio" with Spain and Belgium to better coordinate an 18-month plan covering their three six-month terms. Bartha stated that the Trio's Presidency Program is due November 2009, and he believes that the three countries are on track to meet this deadline.

13. According to Bartha, the Presidency Program will include both a strategic framework and an operational program. He said that the three countries are working together to build a Presidency Program based on common political goals addressing the following topics: the EU's economic and financial situation; energy security; climate; agriculture and fisheries; freedom and justice; and a European Neighborhood Policy. He noted however, that the areas of energy security and climate will be finalized following the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Conference.

KEY HUNGARIAN PRIORITIES

14. Bartha stated that the strategic framework will focus on a strategy that includes crisis response and a "new" social agenda, while the operational programs will outline priorities and legislation. He specifically highlighted the following Hungarian key program priorities: sustainable use of natural resources and "water access issues"; sustainable agricultural and fisheries programs; freedom, security and justice program development - the Stockholm process; and EU enlargement based on the Copenhagen criteria. Bartha commented on the importance of the "Mediterranean initiative" for Spain, but said that the "Eastern initiative" is particularly important for Hungary.

15. Continuing, Bartha said that the Trio is working under the assumption that Ireland will ratify the Lisbon treaty this fall, and as such, it must be prepared to integrate those new measures into the European Union. Szoke noted, however, that Hungary does not foresee its own presidency being greatly affected by such a development because most of the required measures associated with the new treaty will already be in place prior to its presidency.

SIX HUNDRED PERSON STAFF

16. While the GOH plans to formulate the details of its presidency program during the first half of 2010, steps are now underway to create the support structure. Bartha noted that the government's 2010 budget to be submitted in September will include funding for its presidency, but he did not provide any specific figures. He stated that the GOH has already selected approximately six hundred people to fill a broad range of positions, with language and other general training provided for them. In addition, the MFA is drawing up a communications strategy with a focus on potential cultural events during the presidency. Bartha also mentioned a proposed EU-U.S. summit potentially scheduled during Hungary's six-month presidency.

IMPACT OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS

17. With national elections scheduled for spring 2010, there

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is a strong likelihood that the opposition Fidesz party will lead the next government. While this has the potential to complicate planning, Bartha said that the current Socialist government formed a working group with all five parliamentary parties in order to reach a consensus on Hungarian goals during its presidency. According to Bartha, the working group has already met nine times, and he believes there are few, if any, major issues in moving towards consensus on Hungary's EU presidency agenda.
LEVINE